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TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Special Committee on Preferences
Eighteenth session
Geneva, 10 May 1991
Item 2 of the provisional agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Provisional agenda and annotations to the provisional agenda

Note by the UNCTAD secretariat

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II. ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Introduction

By its resolution 77 (III), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development decided to establish the Special Committee on Preferences as a permanent mechanism within UNCTAD. Its terms of reference are described in section VIII of the agreed conclusions adopted by the Special Committee at its fourth session. Accordingly, at its eighteenth session the Committee will, inter alia, carry out the periodic review of the generalized system of preferences.

The eighteenth session of the Special Committee will be held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 10 to 17 May 1991.

Item 1: Election of officers

At its fifth session, the Committee decided to apply the seven-session cycle of rotation (like that annexed to the rules of procedure of the Committee on Manufactures) and to elect a Chairman and a Rapporteur for that session in accordance with the second year of the cycle. It agreed that the election of the Chairmen and Rapporteurs who had held office during the period before its change of status (i.e. during the first four sessions) would be considered as being in application of the first year of the cycle. 1/

Accordingly, the eighteenth session corresponds to the first session of a seven-session cycle, and the Chairman of the eighteenth session will be elected from among the representatives of countries members of the Latin American Group, while the Rapporteur will be selected from among the representatives of countries members of the Asian Group.

The Committee will complete its Bureau by electing five Vice-Chairmen, in accordance with rule 19 of the rules of procedure of the Main Committees 2/ (i.e. two from Group B, one from Group D and two from Groups A and C combined).

Item 2: Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

The provisional agenda for the eighteenth session of the Special Committee on Preferences was approved at consultations convened by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD on 22 May 1990, pursuant to Trade and Development Board decision 143 (XVI).

In its decision 179 (XVIII) of 17 September 1978, the Board stipulated that the annual sessions of the Special Committee on Preferences should be conducted according to the following procedure:

"1. The plenary meetings of the Special Committee on Preferences should be devoted primarily to issues of a general character concerning the generalized system of preferences."

"2. During the sessions of the Special Committee on Preferences, informal plurilateral consultations should be held on individual schemes, if so requested, between preference-receiving countries, on the one hand, and the preference-giving country on the other. These plurilateral consultations would be private and confidential in character."

In his note of 14 February 1991, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD invited States members which were interested in holding plurilateral consultations to advise the secretariat well in advance of the eigthteenth session of the Special Committee so that the necessary arrangements could be made for holding such consultations. The secretariat will in due course inform States members concerned of requests received and of consequent arrangements for consultations.

Item 3: Review of the implementation, maintenance, improvement and utilization of the generalized system of preferences

The Special Committee will have before it the "Fourteenth general report on the implementation of the generalized system of preferences" (TD/B/C.5/134 and Add.1). Chapter I highlights the changes and improvements that have taken place in the various schemes since the seventeenth session of the Special Committee on Preferences. Chapter II identifies the extent to which non-tariff measures apply to GSP-covered products and thereby offset preferential margins. Chapter III provides an overview of currently applied GSP safeguard provisions as an input to the review process currently being carried out by most preference-giving countries. Also relevant to this agenda item are the replies received from preference-giving countries on the operation and effects of the various schemes (TD/B/C.5/PREF/35 to 43), as well as notes by the UNCTAD secretariat providing the latest information on the operation and effects of the EEC scheme 1989 (TD/B/C.5/EEC/15) and the scheme of Japan (TD/B/C.5/JAPAN/15).

Item 4: Consultations on harmonization and improvement of the rules of origin

A report entitled "Technical modification of the notes of the certificate of origin Forms A and APR" (TD/B/C.5/137) puts forward some technical changes to the above forms, arising from changes in the names of certain preference-giving countries and the universal usage of the Harmonized System under all GSP schemes, for consideration and approval of the Committee.

Item 5: Technical assistance in connection with the generalized system of preferences

The Special Committee will have before it a report on "Technical co-operation in connection with the generalized system of preferences" (TD/B/C.5/135) covering the activities in 1990. The report underscores the importance of these activities and addresses the financial viability of the Geneva-based project of technical assistance on the GSP.

The Special Committee will also have before it a report on "Evaluation of the technical co-operation activities relating to the generalized system of preferences and other trade laws" (TD/B/C.5/136), prepared in response to decision 9 (XVI), paragraph 5, of the Special Committee.

Item 6: Provisional agenda for the nineteenth session of the Special Committee on Preferences

In accordance with rule 8 of the rules of procedures of the Main Committees (by which the Special Committee is guided), the secretariat will submit during the session a draft provisional agenda for the nineteenth session of the Committee.

Item 7: Other business

Item 8: Adoption of the report of the Special Committee on Preferences to the Trade and Development Board

The Board will consider the report of the Special Committee during the first part of its thirty-eighth session, scheduled to be held from 2 to 13 December 1991.

The attention of the Committee is drawn to paragraph 6 of decision 302 (XXIX) adopted by the Board on 21 September 1984, whereby the Board instructed its Main Committees and other subsidiary bodies to ensure that their reports were concise, action-oriented and not exceeding the limit of 32 pages.

The Committee may wish to invite the Rapporteur, in co-operation with delegations and the secretariat, to make every possible effort to conform to this decision of the Board.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the Trade and Development Board, thirteenth session, Supplement No. 3 (TD/B/442), paragraphs. 230-232.

2/ At its fifth session the Committee decided to continue being guided, as appropriate, by the rules of procedure of the Committee on Manufactures (ibid., para. 230), which have since been incorporated into a consolidated set of rules of procedure of the Main Committees of the Board (TD/B/740).